Public Health & Brownfields

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Brownfields are former industrial or commercial properties that sit idle because of real or perceived environmental contamination. These properties have a significant impact on local economies and property development. At the city and town level, the responsibility for revitalizing brownfields properties generally includes planning, zoning and economic development agencies. However local health departments, in conjunction with the state health department, can have a strong role in supporting the redevelopment efforts while assuring the protection of public health.

Brownfields Redevelopment Protects Public Health There are many potential health hazards on brownfields properties. Most have physical health hazards such as uncovered holes, unsafe structures, and sharp objects. Past industrial activities often leave behind chemical contamination or drums of chemical wastes. When people enter these properties there is a chance that they may be injured or exposed to toxic chemicals. While most adults show little interest in these properties, children often use brownfields as playgrounds and places to explore. Without incentives for cleanup and redevelopment, contaminated properties may continue to pose public health hazards indefinitely. Brownfields redevelopment programs can protect public health by removing health hazards from our communities.

Public Health Involvement Assists Brownfields Develop-

ment While Brownfields site activities are largely driven by economic and environmental considerations, there is a strong need for public health involvement. As municipalities move forward with Brownfields initiatives, it is imperative that public health issues be considered from the earliest phases of site selection, evaluation and development and that all Brownfields stakeholders work in a coordinated manner. In general, our experience indicates that early and consistent public health involvement at waste and suspected waste sites results in more effective and appropriate address of public health concerns and better communication and involvement with communities, and more timely and efficient clean up and development of the site.

Less Level of Involvement More

Range of Public Health Involvement

- ⇒ For many Brownfields properties, the problems and solutions may be obvious. For these properties, there may be little need for direct health agency involvement.
- For uncontaminated properties with lingering health questions, evaluation by health agencies may reduce unwarranted concerns about redevelopment.
- For many Brownfields properties, the intended future land use can determine the level of public health involvement. Sites which may be higher priorities may include:
 - sites where future development includes residential land use
 - sites where development would include significant contact by sensitive populations particularly children (i.e. schools, day care facilities and recreational ar-
 - sites with significant contamination located in or adjacent to residential areas
 - site slated for high use office space
 - sites slated for industrial or commercial use but known or suspected to be highly contaminated with suspected exposures
- For properties with widespread and complex contamination problems, health agencies can play an important role in recognizing hazards, evaluating health risks, recommending appropriate clean-up actions and conducting risk communication with the public.

More

Number of Properties

Less

For More Information About the Role of Public Health in Brownfields Redevelopment, Contact:

CT Department of Public Health Environmental & Occupational Health Health Assessment Program 410 Capitol Ave Hartford, CT 06134-0308 (860) 509-7742 http://www.dph.state.ct.us/

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry US EPA Region I (ATSDR) 1 Congress St. Suite 1100, Mail Code HBT Boston, MA 02114-2023 (617) 918-1490

For More Information About Brownfield Redevelopment Initiatives in Connecticut, Contact:

Graham Stevens CT Department of Environmental Protection 79 Elm St Hartford, CT 06106 (860) 424-4166

US EPA New England CT Department of Environmental Protection Region I Brownfields Team 1 Congress St. Suite 1100 (HIO) Boston, MA 02114-023 (617) 918-1200

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